

Washington Aqueduct: Safe Water to Drink, Safe for the River

The Baltimore District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, operates the Washington Aqueduct. This utility supplies water for the District of Columbia, Arlington County, and the city of Falls Church, Va.

Safe water to drink

Over one million customers in our nation's capital receive high quality, economically-priced drinking water from the Washington Aqueduct. The two modern treatment plants are continually updating their processes to ensure one hundred percent reliable delivery of water that exceeds all federal and local regulation requirements. To learn more about the operations of the Washington Aqueduct, link to their web site at:

<http://washingtonaqueduct.nab.usace.army.mil>.

Safe for the river

The Washington Aqueduct relies on the Potomac River as a source of all the water processed in the treatment plants. As part of the water treatment process, dirt and other solids removed from the river water to create the drinking water are periodically returned to the river. This sediment discharge is not sludge, and it contains neither sewage nor hazardous materials. To determine whether this process, which is currently permitted by the US Environmental Protection Agency, affects the river, Washington Aqueduct has recently completed a major study on the water quality effects of its periodic discharges of solids. Overall, the report found no significant effects of the discharge on the river ecosystem. View the Executive Summary of the report

at: <http://washingtonaqueduct.nab.usace.army.mil/WQS/ExecutiveSummary.pdf>

Access the complete report at:

<http://washingtonaqueduct.nab.usace.army.mil/WQS/TOC.htm>

Rainfall has been in short supply in the Potomac River basin this past summer and fall. This shortage has continued through the winter, and as a result the Potomac River is currently below the level permitted for discharge. When the river rises, discharges allowed by the permit will occur as part of the necessary maintenance to allow continued production of safe drinking water.

Sound process

Washington Aqueduct is committed to operating the treatment plants in a manner that assures the public safety, is environmentally responsible, and is in compliance with regulations. It will work now and in the future with its customers, government agencies, and the public in pursuit of those objectives.

Additional information:

- [Oral Testimony of Colonel Charles J. Fiala, Jr.
Commander and District Engineer
Baltimore District US Army Corps of Engineers](#)
- [Washington Aqueduct Study Plan for Washington Aqueduct Water Quality
Studies](#)
- [Facts on Washington Aqueduct Discharges into the Potomac River](#)